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SONGS

OF

CONSOLATION

S. A. CRAIG KNOX







SONGS OF CONSOLATION.



SONGS OF CONSOLATION.

BY

ISA CRAIG KNOX



London

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1874

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Sacred
TO A SAINTLY MEMORY

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1 Songs of Consolation.

SONGS OF CONSOLATION.

THE INCARNATION.

NOT in cloud and not in thunder,
Filling all the world with wonder,
 Came to earth the Lord of earth;
But with helpless cries and tears,
Mid a mother's pains and fears,
 Entered by the gate of birth.

By the way of flesh he came—
How else could he kindred claim?
 How else, save life's path he trod,
Coming in the way of breath,
Going out the way of death,
 Be himself the way to God?

Living words by prophets spoken,
Hearts with longing well nigh broken,
 Expectation in the air ;
Blind desire of every nation,
Eyes that waited for salvation,
 Coming of the Son declare.

Thus he came, our new beginning,
For the death doom of our sinning,
 Giving us God's life again :
Then a bright new star shone o'er us,
Then began that heavenly chorus,
 'Peace on earth, good will to men.'

THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

HE came from fasting in the wild,
He made them glad with wine ;
Amid the marriage mirth he smiled,
And gave a gift divine.

Upon the water coldly urned
He looked, to blood of vine
It blushed and glowed and swiftly turned,
Beneath his smile divine.

SONGS OF CONSOLATION.

Not more is here than nature yields;
The rain, the sweet sunshine,
Make miracles in all the fields,
And, Lord, the power is thine !

Life's blessings free as water flow
From the same source divine—
Bid Jesus to the feast, and lo !
He makes the water wine.

HEALING.

‘He healed them all.’—St. Matthew xii. 15.

ALL the birds sang in the sunshine gaily,
All the glad hills blossomed to the sea;
And the sick folk came unto him daily,
As he walked in lovely Galilee.

Sad to see the many eager faces,
Seeking one, amid the multitude;
Sad to see them strive to fill the places,
When they found him, nearest where he
stood.

Sad to see the forms disease had blighted,
Mid the blowing flowers and singing birds ;
The dim eyes with their last hope relighted—
Sadder far than can be said in words.

Some had heard of him and of his healing,
Faint and far had come their cure to meet ;
Some, alike past hope and help and feeling,
Love had carried to the Saviour's feet.

And how weak soe'er the prayer they fashion,
Not in vain on him for help they call ;
All his heart moved with divine compassion
For their sorrows, and 'he healed them all.'

Since they hear his voice, no guidance needing,
The blind stretch their hands to seek his
grace ;
And the deaf with restless eyes are pleading,
Since they see the promise of his face.

And 'he healed them all'—the blind beholding,
See a heavenly beauty round him shine ;
And the deaf ears hear his voice unfolding
From earth's music meaning more divine.

'Healed them all'—the loathly leper creeping
Through the crowd, he touches and makes
clean,

The demoniac, ceasing her wild weeping,
Leaves His presence with an altered mien.

Gladness grows, the bowed down are uplifted,
Wasted women feel their bloom renewed ;
Birds sing, blossoms on the breeze are drifted,
Great the joy among the multitude.

'Tis thy presence, Lord, such bliss bestoweth ;
Since these days have thy compassions
ceased ;

Unto us no healing virtue floweth,
Unto us the sorrows are increased.

He—the Roman—for his faithful servant
Who besought thee, better things believed,
Holding all of thy commands observant
As the hundred who his word received.

From the source of life, for ever hidden
From our deepest search, our clearest sight,
Thou the swift and secret force had'st bidden
When thy miracle amazed men's sight.

But with deeper search and clearer seeing
More and more the miracle dismays,
Though in every changeless law of being
Standing fast thy word its power displays.

Till we truly, in that power believing,
Owning thee the *Living Source of Life*—
Life which from thy spirit law receiving
With its undisturbing force is rife—

Feel that thou canst reach the death power
lurking

In the change between the dead and quick,
That thy will, through ordered nature working,
At the prayer of faith can save the sick.

For all suffering then we claim the healing,
Of the power that was and still is thine,
And yet more we claim thy fellow feeling,
The compassion of thy heart divine.

BLESSING.

THE MOUNT.

HIGHER and higher yet
He goeth up the hill ;
And higher yet, and higher yet,
He leadeth those who will.

Upon the crowning height
The Master takes his seat ;
They follow—he sits in the light,
And they sit at his feet.

Oh, miracle of speech!—

The life in word that flows—
He openeth his mouth to teach,
And forth the blessing goes.

Not whom the world hath blest,
He blesses, but declares
Those whom it pities at the best,
Of earth and heaven the heirs.

Who would such blessing seek
Won by the worst of woes!
The poor, the mournful and the meek!
Oh, who would be as those?

For such with heavenly light
The sacred Mount doth shine;
To such from off its holy height
He gives the law divine.

The law, the death of sin—
The new and living law,
Which, written on the heart within,
Can neither break nor flaw.

The law of love, which shall
By sacrificing save,
By yielding triumph, giving all,
Shall gain by what it gave.

The love that must be loved
Until it reigns supreme ;
That to the world divinely proved
Shall yet the world redeem.

Lord, lead us to the height
Of this thy holy hill,
That we may sit there in thy light
With souls intense and still ;

Thy blessing to receive,
All blessedness above,
And learn ere we thy presence leave
Thy law of perfect love.

DYING.

THE CROSS.

THE city pours her filth and scum
To see the pastime of the day,
From every horrid haunt they come,
Like vultures on the scent of prey,
To see the malefactors die,
To feast themselves on agony.

Three crosses crown Golgotha's height—
Each tree its ghastly fruit doth bear;
A wild thief shrieks to left and right,
He in the midst, hangs silent there
Amid the curses and the cries,
The jeers and shouts and blasphemies.

'Behold him! In the midst there see
The man who called himself a king!
Nay, Son of God! If thou art he'—
Mid laughter with which hell might ring—
'Come down, and save thyself,' they cried,
'Come down, come down, thou crucified!'

Silent he hangs from morn till noon—
Slow are the hours, the torture slow—
Slow drips the blood—it ends not soon;
The careless crowd may come and go,
And eat and drink, nor miss the play
That spices their high holiday.

But now at noon a darkness spreads,
Solemn and strange, o'er all the skies,
On every upturned face it sheds
A livid light—the discord dies,—
Hear, they, as when the nails were driven,
'Father, forgive them,' rise to heaven?

Burning his Saviour soul within,
The passion of Christ's love for men,
Even as an offering for sin,
Upon the cross consumed him, when
Above his agony there rose
That prayer for his assembled foes.

Surged at his feet that sea of hate;
But one reviling by his side
Is won by love so heavenly great,
And turns and owns the crucified:
'To-day,' he to the thief replies,
'Thou'lt be with me in Paradise.'

A loving few were gathered near
Amid that hate-filled multitude;
Leaning on the disciple dear
The heart-pierced mother fainting stood,
And he, remembering their pain
Amid his anguish, spoke again.

‘Woman, behold thy son,’ he said ;
‘Son, see thy mother’—in this wise,
Bending his thorn-crowned, kingly head,
He fixed on them his dying eyes,
And to each other gave the twain
Who loved him best, nor loved in vain.

Slow pass the hours of torture, slow
The warm blood drips, the full veins shrink ;
‘I thirst’ he saith, and in his woe
He tasted what one gave to drink—
Perhaps ’twas some relenting hand
That filled the sponge and held the wand.

The hours pass on, the end is near!
Will not the Father own him now?
Alas! what deeper woe is here,
What dire defeat his lips avow—
‘My God! My God!’ in anguish, ‘why
Hast thou forsaken me?’ they cry.

The hour has come! the pain is past ;
Few are his words and faint his breath ;
And are these doubtful words the last,
The 'It is finished'? Yet he saith,
'Father, my spirit I commit
Into thy hands,' and yieldeth it.

Thy sins—thine own—O sinner, greet
In that dark crew who streamed away,
Fearing each other's eyes to meet,
From Calvary's hill that dreadful day.
They smiting on their breasts depart,
Thou hid'st his murderers in thy heart.

BURIED.

THE SEPULCHRE.

‘DEAD form of my beloved! thou
Art precious,’ cries the mourning heart,
‘I close thine eyes, I kiss thy brow,
I feel it agony to part.

‘And thou dark grave, which now must hide
The cherished form from my embrace,
To me for evermore abide,
Henceforth, the earth’s most precious place.’

Oh! awful triumph of the tomb—

The deepest love must leave us there ;
And ending thus in mortal gloom,
The deeper love, the worse despair.

The few who gathered round the cross,
And thence the murdered Christ received,
Lamented a more bitter loss
Than ever tender hearts had grieved.

Their hope, and all the world's, they laid
In that new grave, to which they bore
His body marred with wounds, and made
To bleed as 'twere at every pore.

They knew not when they laid him down
A swiftly coming dawn would bring
New hope for love's immortal crown :
That from his grave new life should spring.

These wounds the love divine disclose,
Which to the world shall healing give :
That precious death the life bestows
By which our souls divinely live.

Buried with him our dear ones lie,
Not blindly into darkness thrust ;
With him, with them, we calmly die,
Nor dread the gateway of the dust.

RISEN.

WHAT to the soul in sorrow's night
The dawning of another day?
New sorrow comes with morning light,
Fresh bleed the wounds sleep scarce could
stay.

Again unto the opening eyes
Is death disclosed, again they weep,
Rising for one who cannot rise,
Waking for one who still must sleep.

Thus waking early to their woe,
The women ere the dawn of day
Went forth to seek the grave, where low
In death their Lord and master lay.

The living wonder of the dawn
Was born in heaven, and spread and grew ;
The veil of night was half withdrawn,
And gave the sleeping earth to view.

Spring's resurrection breathed abroad,
And many a blossom shook its wings
Dust free, arising from the sod,
A glory among living things.

It breathed about the garden tomb
Made in the rock and sealed with stone—
Hard rock, to thee it brings no bloom,
It brings no life to thee alone!

O Death, to thee no morning brings
The light by which thou shalt awake ;
The blossoms of a thousand springs
Out of thy dust in vain shall break.

Our life is vainer than a flower ;
Vain is our hope, our sorrow vain !
If this be all—a little hour
Annuls our joy, annuls our pain.

And though the flower of life be fair,
If false its highest promise prove—
If but a motion of the air
Its cry for an undying love,

'Twere better that we had not been—
If death's dominion holds, and he
The face of God has never seen,
Who dreamt that dream of life to be ;

Better that unto us be born

No child, to us no son be given,
That, mocked of God, creation's scorn,
Our race should fail from under heaven.

The childless world for some few years

Would bear her freight of human woe,
And then, rejoicing with her peers,
Voiceless but glad would onward go.

Dim was the dawn its light that lent,

Ere day rose bright beyond belief;
Dim were their thoughts who weeping went
To Christ's new grave to nurse their grief.

Glorious and fair the day that burst

From that dim dawn as these drew near,
And learnt that death had done its worst—
'The Lord has risen! He is not here.'

This greeting from the empty tomb
Is doubtful joy till he appears ;
Their risen sun dispels the gloom—
And Mary sees him through her tears.

The light which on that morning broke,
Lights the dark realm where death was king,
The greeting from that grave which spoke,
Round all the world shall joyful ring.

Glorious and fair beyond our hope
The day which in that hour had birth,
The glad new day of boundless scope,
No more to set upon the earth.

‘The Lord has risen!’ Our life appears
Divine in that diviner light,
Which shines immortal through our tears
What time we sit in sorrow’s night.

‘The Lord has risen,—has risen indeed!’
Throughout the earth the tidings run,
In higher thought and holier deed
Life blossoms to her living sun.

ASCENDED.

‘WHY stand ye gazing yet?’

The brow of Olivet

Darkened as he was parted from you there,

And empty is the air ;

Only a cloud in view,

Only a bird’s wing in the summer blue.

‘Why stand ye gazing yet?’

Looking from Olivet,

Ye see the white walls of Jerusalem,

Standing each stone of them :—

There is no sign of fear ;

Nothing is changed, because he is not here.

No longer through the land
With his devoted band
Of witnesses, shall the Redeemer walk ;
With his disciples talk
By the wayside, or climb
Some lonely hill to hold a converse more
sublime.

Down yonder in the vale
Gather, with sorrow pale,
The household whom he loved, and who no
more
Will watch him coming o'er
The hill, and haste to meet
The heavenly joy of his returning feet.

The strange things of these days
Have filled them with amaze,

Have sadly seemed to set him far above,
And out of reach of love ;
And now the sisters twain
To draw nigh each to each in love and help
are fain.

Oh, to have been as they
Who gazing stood that day !
Oh, to have been as one of those who knew
The Christ—that favoured few
Who heard his living word,
Nor drew on empty air a vision of their
Lord.

Did not a solemn change
Pass on their lives?—a strange
And awful sense of unreality
Shadow the earth, as he
Was parted from them there,
Melting away into the viewless air ?

O our ascended Lord !
We who receive their word
Who saw thee going up from Olivet,
Believe that thou art yet
Still nearer to be found,
Than if thy blessed feet we there could
gather round.

Lost in the viewless air,
To be found everywhere,
Thenceforth, beneath our most miraculous sky ;
Ascended up on high,
Yet in each lowly heart
Ready to come and dwell, and never more
depart.

THE INVITATION.

'COME unto me.' Who calls?
For we are weary; heavier every day
Life's heavy burden falls.

'Come unto me.' Who saith
He giveth rest? There is but one who
keeps
That promise: it is Death.

'Tis Christ who calleth thus,
'Come unto me, and I will give you rest'—
His spirit calleth us.

Surely thou wilt not mock
The weary! Thou art tender whom we
trust,
Thy word is as a rock!

And coming at thy call,
The burden of our selfishness and sin,
Life's heavy load, will fall!

With this no more oppress,
Taking love's easy yoke, love's burden light,
We find thy promised rest.

DAWN.

HAST thou seen the night withdrawn,
When the dews the deepest lie ;
Earth re-entering the dawn,
Day returning to the sky ?

Scarce at any moment more
Is the light, the darkness less,
Only paler than before
Seem the shadows as they press.

Now, like mystic flower, the light
Opens swift from change to change ;
And a world grows into sight,
Unfamiliar, new and strange.

Darkly is the cedar spread
On the pure and pearly skies,
Dimly glows the gold and red,
And ghost-white the lilies rise.

Then a sudden burst of beams,
Waking thousand sleeping things,
Pours a splendour, in whose streams
Doves are sunning silver wings.

Often thus upon the soul
Dawns the day of grace divine,
Gradual light o'erflows the whole,
Ere the sun arise and shine.

Every dark denial dies
In the darkness unaware ;
Truth o'erspreads the spirit's skies,
And desire grows pure as prayer.

Surely grows the heavenly light
Though its source is hid from view ;
To the soul's awakened sight
All things are revealed anew.

Till at length the light o'erflows,
And the conscious spirit, won
To new life, rejoicing knows
God its source and Christ its sun.

Heavenly ardours wake and throw
Glory over earth and sky ;
And life enters in the glow,
On the day of duty high.

SPRING.

MY soul seemed dead
As a leafless tree,
In the little wood,
As I wandered free.

The boughs were bare,
And the doubtful blue
Of a dim spring day
Looked down and through,

While I cast myself
On the lifeless sod ;
Unable to lift
A thought to God.

But with tender blade
Half out of the sheath,
Fresh grass was springing
Dead leaves beneath.

And on each bare bough,
Though no leaf was seen,
Yet each tree was clad
In a mist of green.

And the whole wood breathed
Like a living thing
With the breath of life,
With the life of spring.

Then I lay as dead
On the living earth,
Longing to share
In its sweet new birth :

I thought if I lie
Asking though dumb,
Here the sweet spirit
Of life may come.

Let me stretch out
My arms like these,
God will not give me
Less than his trees.

THE FOURTH WATCH.

St. Matthew xvi. 22-32.

'TIS the fourth watch of the night ;
 Tossing on the stormy sea,
They are longing for the light,
 They are struggling wearily.

When amid the night and storm,
 Walking on the watery floor,
They behold, in phantom form,
 Him they left upon the shore.

'Tis a spirit !' this they cry,
Trembling as he draweth near—
Jesus, saying 'It is I,'
Comes and bids them cease to fear.

Often, like that little crew,
The frail bark of faith is out
Beating stormy waters through
On a midnight sea of doubt.

Faith would deem the Saviour nigh
Walking on the waves again,
But there comes the bitter cry,
'Tis a phantom of the brain.

Then there grows beyond control
The intolerable pain
Of the yearning of the soul
That hath known its Lord in vain.

Doubt no more may be endured,
And, like Peter, to the waves
It must trust to be assured
That it hath the Christ it craves.


Casts itself upon the sea!
Sinks appalled by wind and wave!
Knows, in sinking, it is he!
Sinking calls on him to save!

Caught and clasped within the hold
Of the all-sustaining hand,
Finds the winds and waves controlled,
And the morning on the land.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

HERE in the wilderness of souls,
My fainting spirit groans ;
No water in this waste there is,
No bread amid these stones.

The light beats through the blazing day,
But light no more is sweet ;
It shines to burn, but shows no way
Before the weary feet.



No footprints mark the barren sand,
It sinks beneath the tread ;
From sky to sky the dreary land
Is lifeless, dry, and dead.

No refuge of a rock is given
From the unpitying skies ;
God sheds a glory in his heaven,
But blinds these living eyes.

I perish in this wilderness,
My fainting spirit groans ;
No water in this waste there is,
No bread amid these stones.

Yet let thy spirit heed my call,
Lord of my life, and lo,
Here shall the living manna fall,
The living water flow.

THE TABERNACLE.

A RETURN.

FALSE was the voice that in my heart
Whispered, and bade me dwell apart,
Bade me seek God in loftier ways
Than by weak prayer and feeble praise ;

For that in nature's solitudes
Of silent hills and breathing woods,
More than in temples made with hands
The soul within his presence stands.

I drowned my voice amid the roar
Of waters on a lonely shore,
And this, I thought, was nobler praise
Than mingling it with infant lays ;

Far out of human sound and sight
Lay lifted on the lonely height ;
And held my worship purer there
Than joining in the 'Common Prayer.'

False voice, that led me more astray,
As more apart I took my way ;
Until pride's barren path I trod,
Further, and further still, from God.

But grief laid hold of me, and led
Back from that brink a heart that bled ;
'Twas such a common grief, it must
Be wept into the common dust.

I went into the house of prayer,
And knelt with other mourners there ;
A better spirit whispered then,
'God's tabernacle is with men.'

The broken murmurs floating round,
Rose from the sea of souls profound,
More deep, more awful, than the roar
Of many waters on the shore.

As fire by fire enkindled glows,
From soul to soul the spirit flows ;
Save God come down, no mountain height
Can lift us up into his light.

My hope is here, that he is nigh
To listen to the feeblest cry ;
In that, the meanest trusts, I trust,
With faith that blossoms from the dust.

THE MERCY SEAT.

‘And there will I meet thee.’—Exodus xxv. 17.

IN the most holy place,
The secret, sacred place,
In ancient days stood veiled the seat of
heavenly grace.

Above the holy things
Brooded the cherub wings,
Symbols of mercy swift, and love's sweet
shelterings.

And, sign more gracious yet,
The golden pinions met
Above the ark wherein the law itself was set.

And there, all veiled and dim,
The dwelling place of him
Who owned the Mercy Seat was 'tween the
cherubim.

For I will meet thee there,
And commune with thee there,
Said God, and from this place will hear my
people's prayer.

Down through the years, replete
With anguish and defeat,
That prayer hath risen toward the veiled
Mercy Seat.

Down through the years the cry
Hath echoed ceaselessly,
' Be merciful to us, O Lord, our God Most
High.'

What lips, with anguish pale,
Have poured the ceaseless wail,
What streaming, straining eyes have striven to
pierce the veil.

What shipwrecked souls have stood,
In dark despairing mood,
Appealing against God unto some higher good.

No longer, as of old,
The cherubims of gold,
God's meeting-place with men, with shadowing
wings enfold.

Behind a darker veil,
Our cry would seem to fail,
Where Christ hath entered in, thorn-crowned
and torture-pale.

For lo! we witness still,
The holy law fulfil,
And vindicate itself by adding ill to ill.

Adding sin's hurt to sin—
How then shall good begin?
Yea how shall God be God, save mercy enter in?

But the old symbols teach
The truth our hearts would reach,
The truth the years of Christ have echoed
each to each.

That God's most holy place,
His secret, sacred place,
Is still the mercy seat where reigns his sovran
grace.

And when our souls at last
These outer courts have passed,
Where o'er God's mercy still the veil is darkly
cast ;

The veil itself shall fall,
And we adoring shall
God's hidden purpose see and Mercy over all.¹

¹ 'That he might have mercy upon all.'—Romans xi. 32.
'Whose tender mercies are over all his works.'

THE LIVING SACRIFICE.

‘I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.’—Romans xii. 1.

I COMMUNED with my heart one night when
 pain
 Had bound me on my bed,
When a swift fire ran through each throbbing
 vein
 Up to my burning head.

I had been drinking of life's bitter cup,
And, closing weary eyes,
I felt as if I lay there lifted up
As for a sacrifice.

Like a great wheel of torture infinite
The fiery heavens went round,
On one of whose star points amid the night
Burning I lay and bound.

And my heart whispered, God will still accept
An offering by fire :
Offer thyself ; and to my lips there leapt
A flame of pure desire.

Then, as in vision, creatures doomed and vowed,
To slaughter led along,
I seemed to see, the heifer, lowing loud,
Milk-white, and mild, and strong.

Young lambs and doves men in their bosoms bore,
Victims whose pleading eyes
Might make the swiftest slayer half abhor
The bloody sacrifice.

O'ershadowed by the mystery of pain,
'Will God accept,' I said—
Alas, my heart came back to me again,
Sickening with doubt and dread.

Then I beheld a better sacrifice
Where, at the font of grace,
The pure baptismal water dew-like lies
Upon an infant's face.

With holy joy a tender mother there
Owned a more tender love
Than hers, a father owned a father's care
His fondest care above:

While the most precious gift God gave but now
They to the Giver bring,
And yield it, bound by the baptismal vow
A living offering.

And looking up into the face of him
Who took the babe, with awe,
And a great joy in which mine eyes grew dim,
The face of Christ I saw.

Then in new garments, with a glad new song,
And gladly willing feet,
Unto God's altar came a youthful throng
That offering to repeat.

Yielding the dew and beauty of their youth
They knelt in silent prayer:
I looked, and lo! the Son of God in truth
Laid hands upon them there.

Thither they came, again and yet again,
To offer themselves up;
One doth each living sacrifice sustain
With blessed bread and cup:

‘Preserve thee unto everlasting life,
Body and soul,’ he saith;
And lo! the blessing with all blessings rife
Was his who conquered death.

Upon the sacrifice which God entreats,
Fire kindles from above,
And all that we can bring acceptance meets,
And is consumed by love.

O heart, though dim thy vision, strive to see
And triumph over pain,
Like the old sacrifices ours should be,
Unblemished, free from stain.

Our best of life, the joy, the grace, the strength—

For these no more we kill—

We offer, and pain-purchased, bring at length

Pure heart and holy will.

DEAD.

1 Timothy v. 6.

DEAD! I looked in her eyes,
Full of an eager light;
She gazed on herself, in pleasure's guise,
Arrayed for the festive night.
Thus she takes her delight,
Night after night alway;
She seems alive by night,
But she has no life by day:
She is dead! for when I looked in her eyes
By the light of life's realities,
Alas, they had no sight.

Dead! For the living words
I breathed into her ear,
To waken the soul's responsive chords,
Alas! she did not hear;
Nor the voice so still and small
Of the spirit from on high:
She heeds not the poor who call
Nor the perishing who cry.

She is not clad for the tomb—
There are flowers upon her head;
She is fair, in her life's full bloom,
Her lips are passionate red:
Daintily clad and fed,
She looks in the glass—look thou
In the glass of time instead;
Can'st thou not see the worm consume,
The garments perished, perished the bloom,
The things that die, all dead?

Ah! by sorrow and pain,
Or it may be by joy,
Christ may make her alive again,
And the power of death destroy.
Strong is his word to save
Who cried 'Come forth' to him
Who had lain three days in the grave
And was bound in every limb.

THE GLOW-WORM.

‘O soul! how deep is thy doubt?’
‘It is deep as despair;
It is dark as the universe,
If no God is there.’

Deep is the doubt of our day—
If a book we mis-read,
We ask, shall we God disown?
Not a clause of a creed.

We ask—if one raised the dead,
And we saw them rise,
Should we not simply cease
To believe our eyes?

Yet if part of an order of things
That cannot be moved—
Cannot change for love, or for hate,
Cannot be loved ;

Why should the universe lie
On my heart like a load?—
Why should my inmost soul
Cry out for a God?

I go forth into the night
To utter my cry ;
The stars in their places shine,
And the moon is high.

Strange flowers in the meadows seem
To have risen to-night—
Moon-flowers, with a ghostly gleam
Of unearthly white.

I am wet with the heavy dews
As I brush the flowers,
But my heart is the withered grass
Which the flame devours.

I cross the moonlighted mead,
And hasten to meet
Shadows that out of the wood
Reach forth for my feet.

Here I can groan aloud,
As I stand in the dark—
The stars are shut out, but lo!
At my feet a spark.

In a single drop of dew
Such a spark were quenched,
And here every leaf and blade
In a flood is drenched.

Just such a spark of light
In my soul is found—
The floods have been over my soul,
Yet it is not drowned.

And I own as I cast me down
With the worm on the sod,
That my soul like the worm is lit
By a living God.

THE CALLING.

'Is it life, or is it death?'
Had been spoken underbreath,
 Where a little child was lying :
In that moment down to dust
Had that flower-like life been thrust,
 A soul first had lived in dying.

But for answer back again,
Through each fever-wasted vein
 The swift ebbing turned to flowing,
And each breath, as when the clod
First drew in the life of God,
 Each faint breath came life bestowing.

In that hour the soul awoke,
In that hour the spirit spoke,
 God by name his child was naming ;
He had claimed that soul in death,
And, returning life and breath,
 Now in life his own was claiming.

And the child lay listening there
Till its breathing grew to prayer,
 Hearing, answering, rising, falling :
Ah ! and he remembers still
The great 'Wilt thou' and 'I will,'
 And the clearness of the calling.

Childhood, carried to and fro
With the movement and the show,
 Leads a life of little will—
Leads the life of growing flower,
In the sunshine and the shower
 Takes the good and takes the ill.

Filled with anguish, filled with awe,
In a childish dream he saw,
 Rising up, an endless stair,
Which he longed to climb, but ever
Seemed to fail in the endeavour,
 And fall back to darkness there.

Climbing step by step a stair
In the darkness, he was ware
 Of a meaning in his dream;
He had fallen back from God
Through the years, and now he trod
 Darkly to a distant gleam.

‘Nay, I shall but fall again,’
Thought he, smit with sudden pain,
 ‘On that height I shall not stand;—
I would climb there if I could’—
Helpless in the dark he stood,
 And Christ seemed to reach his hand.

Dream and vision pass away,
It is manhood's middle day,
 And the world's work he is doing ;
Let him but of this be free,
He will serve God faithfully,
 Earthly good no more pursuing.

Ah! he pauses but to own
All his purpose overthrown,
 And life drifting ever faster
From each lofty hope and aim—
Then a voice will hearing claim,
 ‘Come and serve a better master.’

Now the work aside is laid,
And the wages earned are paid ;
 Dreams return the while life lingers—
Weary is the man and old,
And what seemed his gains of gold
 Turn to ashes in his fingers.

All the house is still at last,
He is listening to the past,
And one knocketh at the door!
Surely, as with trembling hand,
He unbars each iron band,
He hath heard that voice before.

Will he take the last and worst,
Who should have the best and first?—
Now the door is open wide—
'I will come and sup with thee,'
Saith the Lord, for it is he,
Waiting there at eventide.

THE CONFESSION.

St. Matthew xvi. 16.

‘THOU art the Christ!’ my lips may frame
The words—they long have known the name ;
But yet unless revealed to me,
I cannot know that thou art He.

The Son of God, sent forth from Him,
Wearing no likeness faint and dim,
But such that they who long to see
The Father, still must look on thee.

Thou art God's mind in word arrayed !
Thou art God's heart in love displayed !
What must it be to realise
Thy life, thy love, thy sacrifice ?


'Thou art the Christ !' This is to feel
What flesh and blood can not reveal,
That there is none in heaven but thee,
The Lord of all, the Lord of me.

Reveal this unto me, and then
I must confess thee unto men,
And when and where thou callest me,
I must arise and follow thee.

ALONE, YET NOT ALONE.

A sob and a bitter cry
Came to my ear,
Alone, in the dark, my child
Awoke, and in fear ;

Alone ! in the dark !—I felt
All I had known
Of the soul's forsaken grief,
In my infant's moan.



And I rose, and would have gone,
Out of the gloom
To carry my little one,
To the lighted room ;

To carry him in my arms,
To make him nest
In my bosom, to see him lie
With his fears at rest.

And yet alone, in the dark,
I left him still,
And held my heart from a joy
Which might prove his ill.

When, only to hear my voice,
He pleaded sore,
'Tween me and my child I left
An open door.

It sufficed : I listened, I heard
The sobbing cease ;
And alone, yet not alone,
He lay down in peace.

Leave thou, in my darkest night,
An open door
Between thee and me, my God!
I will ask no more.

When I wake, Lord! I in the dark,
Thou in the light,
Like a child forsaken, awake,
Alone, in the night,

Father, leave open to me
The door of prayer,
And I will lie down in peace
Because thou art there.

‘OUR FATHER.’

AMONG the little ones,
‘Our Father,’ let me say,
I learn the holy childhood thus,
And am a child as they.

Among the servants, Lord,
I breathe the prayer divine,
A servant among servants, so
A servant—theirs and thine.

'Our Father,' among men—
The evil and the good—
Daily for all on thee I call,
And own their brotherhood.

Child, servant, brother, thus
Alone can I be one
With him by whom in perfectness
The Father's will was done.

‘HALLOWED BE THY NAME.’

FATHER, ‘hallowed be thy name!’

We thy holy name who bear,
We who thus thy sonship claim,
This our first, our constant prayer.

Oh, that all thy name may know!

And we know thy name is Love—
This the holiest name below,
This the highest name above.



Let thy love shine forth in us,
Be in us thy likeness shown.
And thy name be hallowed thus
By the sons thy love doth own.

•

‘THY KINGDOM COME.’

OUR hearts are aching with longing,
Longing mid doubt and pain,
For the coming of the Kingdom,
For Christ to rise and reign.

But the day of earth's redemption
Alas! we shall not see ;
The city is filled with lying,
And with horrid cruelty.

We pray, but our faith is failing ;
God's word, how shall it stand ?
Would we might cry—'Repent ye,
For the Kingdom is at hand.'

At hand ! yea it is nursing
On every mother's knee,
Christ's Kingdom, earth's great future,
God's gracious time to be.

Therefore with eager longing,
'Thy Kingdom come' we pray ;
By death's gate we shall enter,
O Lord, by life's may they !

‘THY WILL BE DONE.’

SWEET is the close of day,
When all the fields are still,
Earth looks as if it list’ning lay
For God to speak his will.

In the clear round of sky
On one side sinks the sun,
A solemn splendour which the eye
Scarce dares to look upon.

While, on the other hand,
The fair moon rises clear,
Heaven's harmonies swell wave-like, grand,
And flow from sphere to sphere.

'God's will is done in Heaven'
Comes from the setting sun,
And to the rising moon is given
A voice, 'His will is done.'

Pale Venus, fiery Mars,
Come forth, as if by name
God called out, one by one, his stars,
And one by one they came.

And in the midst I stand,
Smitten with sudden awe;
These worlds go forth at God's command,
His will their perfect law.

Oh, that I were as they,
Unerring, swift to run
My course of blessing day by day—
For so thy will is done.

Lord of my wavering will,
As these I cannot be,
But help me freely to fulfil
Thy purpose loving-free—

And in thy law of love
Make all our wills as one,
That 'as it is in Heaven above,
On Earth thy will be done.'

‘GIVE US EACH DAY OUR
DAILY BREAD.’

THE children ask for bread,
Undoubting undenied,
For freely this their daily fare
The father doth provide.

And if my daily bread,
This first and simplest need,
Each day, undoubting, I can ask,
I am a child indeed.

•

Nor for himself alone
Can any breathe this prayer ;
We ask, and what the Father gives,
As children we must share.

‘FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES.’

WHEN one hath sinned against our love,
Whom yet we love despite his sin,
We know there comes a deadly strife,
For love or wrong to win.

For still the heart that did the wrong
The love accuses and denies;
And adds to wrong the greater wrong,
The wrong that justifies.

And thus love dies ; else, rising up,
Casts out the wrong that it may live ;
The 'erring one repents, returns,
And says the word 'Forgive.'

The wrong cast out, the love hath place,
Nay, groweth greater than before ;
Then only too the wrong seems great,
Because the love is more.

Lord, we have sinned against thee long,
Yet let thy great forgiveness win
Our hearts to thy divinest love,
Thy love cast out our sin.

‘LEAD US NOT INTO
TEMPTATION.’

IN its weakness full of fear,
Often thus a child will cry,
‘Not this way, my father, here
It is dark,’ or ‘hard,’ or ‘high.’

And the father holds him fast,
Whispers ‘Well the way I know,
Till the danger all is past,
Child, I will not let thee go.’

‘Not this way.’ O Lord, we need,
And thou dost allow the prayer,
For our weakness thus we plead,
And our Father’s tender care.

Yet our Father oft denies
The smooth path we fain would choose,
Seeing that our safety lies
In the way we would refuse.

‘Lead us,’ Lord, and all is well,
Though temptations round us press
On the mount, the pinnacle,
Or the lonely wilderness.

‘DELIVER US FROM EVIL.’

IN dark Gethsemane
The prayer is offered up—
‘Father, if it be possible,
Let pass from me this cup.’

Flesh of our flesh, his heart
Anticipates its pain ;—
The kiss of treachery, the flight
Of his faint-hearted train.

Alas! the stinging lash!
Alas! the crown of thorn!
Alas! the spitting of contempt
Alas! the hiss of scorn!

Alas! the welling wounds!
Alas! the blinding heat!
The world that swims in agony
Beneath his bleeding feet.

Behold a mystery!
The Father's will is done,
And through the agony must pass
The well-beloved Son.


Ah! by that agony
The Saviour suffered thus,
That we in every ill might pray,
'Good Lord, deliver us!'

From sin the evil power
From which he died to save,
The power which bound him to the cross
And laid him in the grave.

MORNING GATES.

AT the morning gates
Praise awaits!
Morning gates that backward fold,
Gates of gold.

All that hath a voice
Doth rejoice,
Gladly passing into light
From the night.



Birds of every wing
Wake and sing—
Singing high amid the glow,
Singing low.

Hills stand in the light,
Still and bright;
They who close on glory gaze
Meekly praise.

Valleys lowly laid,
In the shade,
Murmur thanks for light renewed,
Tear bedewed.

Flowers in every field
Odours yield;
Thus their morning sacrifice
Doth arise.

More than flowers' breath
Our song saith—
From these living souls of ours
Spirit flowers.

More than high hills see,
That can we—
Light of our God's face,
His great grace.

Praise birds cannot sing,
Lord, we bring,
While we at thy gates rejoice,
Heart and voice.

Praising God we stand,
In a band ;
In the morning of our days
Singing praise.

NIGHTINGALES.


IF I had the voice of a bird,
The scent of a flower,
• Would I not praise the Lord,
Day by day, hour by hour?

For then if the heart of a man
Heard me sing, felt me sweet,
He would praise me, and praise must be
His for whom it is meet.

If a skylark sings in a cloud,
It runs over with praise ;
If a lily blows, all the air
Savours sweet as it sways.

I thrill in the dark of the wood
Where the leaves are unstirred,
At the passion of sweetness poured
By the voice of a bird.

And my heart is lifted to him
To whom there belongs
The song and the savour of love,
Praise of praise, song of songs.



LOVE.

To Samaria's erring daughter
Jesus said his love should be
Like a well of living water
Flowing everlastingly.

Like a well fed from a mountain
With whole heavens of dew and rain,
Ceaseless as it flows the fountain
Fills from hidden springs again.

On the world its life bestowing,
Giving freely as he gives,
Jesus sets love's fountain flowing
Wheresoe'er his spirit lives.

One with thankless lips is tasting,
One his bitter ashes throws,
One is vexing, one is wasting,—
Still the stream of blessing flows.

Full and sweet, and ever sweeping
Taint and trouble from its course,
Health and healing ever keeping;
For these cannot touch its source.

JOY.


IT was hers who lingering lay,
Breathing pain with every breath,
Hopelessly from day to day,
Waiting the deliv'rer Death.

When with burning pangs disease
Seared her shrinking flesh, if pain
Left her but a moment's ease,
Then she had her joy again.

Yea, she had it all the while,
Overmastering her woe,
Brightening to a patient smile
On the lips yet moaning low.

In through every gate of sense
Suffering flowed—was it a dream?
Ask philosophy from whence
Came the joy which reigned supreme.

Its poor self-complacent bliss,
Half her anguish would destroy,
And it nothing knows of this
The unutterable Joy.



PEACE.

ONE left a rich bequest
Unto a friend,
Who from that day beheld
His fortunes mend.

From enemies the man
Had much to fear ;
He turned them into friends
With loving cheer.

From poverty the man
Had all to dread ;
But now he is secure
Of more than bread.

Cares came to him, he sent
Them all away,
Without a plea to come
Another day.

Thus Christ unto his friends
The troubled, poor,
And persecuted, makes
His Peace secure.

GOODNESS.

Galatians v. 22, 23.

ALL the graces of the soul
Link to link are bound,
Each begins and ends the whole
Of the blessed round.

Thus if we begin with love,
In the golden chain,
Through the other links we move
Back to love again.

All are good ; but one there is
Which we Goodness call—
Like the golden clasp is this
Which connects them all.

COMMUNION.

‘And those many opinions about religion that are everywhere so eagerly contended for on all sides, where this (the life of Christ) doth not lie at the bottom, are so many shadows fighting with one another.’—CUDWORTH, 1647.

THEY were an-hungered and athirst,
For in them stirred the life divine;
They hungered for the heavenly bread,
They thirsted for the holy wine.

But there arose a strife of tongues,
That cried where’er the feast was spread,
‘Ours is the table of the Lord,
We only eat the living bread.’

‘Here is the sacrifice restored,
Where incense breathes and tapers shine,
Christ on the altar be adored,
Receive him in the bread and wine.’

‘Not there, but here,’ another cried ;
‘Christ dwells not in the outward sign :
Draw near, and in thy faithful soul,
Receive him *with* the bread and wine.’

But one without called bitterly,
‘They perish whom Christ died to save,—
They perish in their misery,
For whom his flesh and blood he gave!’

Then they went forth, and in his name
They did the work he came to do ;
They lived in him and he in them ;
They learnt with him to suffer too.

And when an-hungered and athirst,
Returned the still divided band,
Christ strengthened them by bread and wine
From every altar in the land.

UNION.

SUNSET tracked upon the sea
Dazzling fair a line of light,
Fit the path of souls to be
To the land that knows no night.

In a low room washen white
A small company were met,
With that bridge of beams in sight,
In their midst a table set.

There were fishers, young and bold,
On the deep who cast their lives;
A few husbands grey and old,
Among many aged wives.

Faces wrinkled as the sand,
Hands rough from the rope and oar,
Hearts set heaving on the land
By each wave that shook the shore.

And they sang of pastures green,
And of rest by quiet streams,—
Of the things they had not seen,
No, not even in their dreams.

None are weary, none are old,
None are sick, and none are poor;
In their midst the street of gold,
And the land beyond secure.

Sank the sun, the waters chill
Swept, effaced, that pathway bright,
But in growing dimness still
On those faces there was light.

Breaking bread from hand to hand,
Hushed they sat, till solemnly
One who rose amid the band,
Said, 'There shall be no more sea.'


Nothing to divide us more
From our brethren, all restored,
Safe on the eternal shore,
In the love of Christ our Lord.

THE BOX.

St. Mark xiv. 3.

SHE brake the box, and on his head
The costly spikenard freely shed :
 Its fragrance filled the place ;
And he on whom it was bestowed,
Who knew the gift from love had flowed,
 Approved the lavish grace.

He murmured at the waste, whose heart
Already played the traitor's part :
 The others murmured too ;
They nursed their small economies,
They kept the bag before their eyes,
 And hid their lord from view.



Hid from their hearts that more and more
He could increase the precious store
 From which such gifts are shed—
Freely the sweets of nature grow,
But love must bid their fragrance flow,
 And love the ointment spread.

Look at the liberal world, and see
Each blessing lavished boundlessly!

 What, dost thou call it waste?
The beauty of the wayside flower,
The sweetness scattered every hour,
 That all alike may taste?

They who the costliest gifts have given,
Raising the fair-wrought towers to heaven,
 Whose precious stones endure,
Filling the place with prayer and psalm,
Anointing hearts with beauty's balm,
 Have most enriched the poor.

While they each gen'rous use who chide—
Whether they seek their greed to hide,
Or but of sight too near,
Would save the cistern's scant supply,
And let the feeding fount run dry—
Rob God's poor souls of cheer.

O generous heart, thy need fulfil,
Spend if thou wilt more freely still,
And love's rich odours raise ;
If all for love, and not for pride,
Surely thy Lord will take thy side,
And crown thee with his praise.

THE BUILDING OF THE CITY.

BEHOLD the city is building!—
Why do ye gazing stand?
It is not in the clouds: the city
Is in the midst of the land.

The little hills are round it,
And a river flows between;
And I say, 'Behold the vision,'
For the city ye have seen.

Ye know its chiefest places,
And its houses, street on street :
Ye know, I know, the faces
Of the men and women we meet.

Men groan within that city,
And sinful women snare ;
Hell can have no uncleanness
Worse than is harboured there.

The river they have polluted
Till its waters foam with death,
And the foul stream bubbles daily
With the self-destroyer's breath.

And alas ! in that cruel city
The children bear such woe,
That tender hearts are asking
If the earth be God's or no.

Yet here is the city building,
A labour of many days ;
And her walls shall be salvation,
Her gates shall all be praise.

A river of life, her river,
Shall flow and shall not cease,
And they who dwell within her
Shall dwell in joy and peace.

I see the white walls rising
By the river, day by day,
They are building, building, building,
Everywhere and alway.

I see the builders going
On the white walls to and fro ;
I am joined unto the builders,
With some I surely know.

One struck hands with another
With whom he had been at strife :
' Let us live, instead of striving
About the way of life.'

' How come you here?' said another,
' For you are not one of us.'
' Let him build,' said a master builder
' It will never be built but thus.'

Some said, ' We will build the city
With our gold and precious stones,'
And some ' We will build the city
With our flesh and with our bones.'

But when shall we behold it?
For death comes swiftly thus—
We shall walk unseen amidst it
And Christ in the midst of us.

COUNTED LOSS.

‘These I counted loss for Christ.’—Philippians iii. 7.

‘And thence, beloved, you see that godly men in all ages have been free to part with their credit, to renounce their profit, to lay down their lives for spiritual things sake. Now did they not apprehend a reality and certainty in them, surely they were no less than fools and madmen to forgoe substances for shadows. It were no less than madness for a man to give himself up to be a prisoner when he might be free, to be a fool when he might be accounted wise, to be poor when he might be rich, if he did not see a reality in spiritual things for which he willingly forsakes and leaves all others.’—CRADOCK, M.D., 1646.

VAIN fleeting world! I have renounced
All thou cast give as only loss;
Thy pomp and pride I have renounced,
To glory only in the cross.

Count me a fool, O world! to loose
My hands from holding fast thy gains—
A little while, if these I choose,
The hands are dust, and what remains?

Count me a fool! mine eyes to close,
Save to the things I cannot see;
Thine are the shadows, cheats and shows,
That pass, and change, and seem to be.

Count me a fool! for be it known
I count as loss thy richest prize:
The highest wisdom which I own,
Must be a folly in thine eyes.

Then wrap me in thy robe of scorn,
Give me thy thorny crown to wear,—
The cross was by the Master borne,
And all who follow him must bear.

Vain fleeting world! I have pronounced
All thou canst give as only loss;
Thy pomp and pride I have renounced,
To glory only in the cross.

UNTO THIS LAST.

St. Matthew xx. 16.

THEY murmured when they came,
To take the promised pay ;
They murmured—not that some had more,
That none had less than they.

Ah! with our hearts too well
That murmuring accords—
But if at their poor grudge we smile,
What mean the Master's words?

This lesson of our Lord's,
Think you it would convey
A pretext for the privilege
Of idling all the day?

Because the end may be
The same some ages hence;
Because our liberal Master means
To make no difference?

The end! When will it be?
What know'st thou of the end?
Which giving all thy promised good
Must all thy thought transcend.

What if indeed the Lord
Will give to all the same?
Surely thine inmost heart must own
Not more, but less thy claim.

Thou couldst not think for shame
Thy work or service hard!
Was not that heavenly service still
Its own too great reward?

Nay, in thy vineyard, Lord,
This were enough to win
To serve thee first, and serve thee last,
By early entering in.

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